

**To:** Garvin, Shawn[garvin.shawn@epa.gov]; Ryan, Daniel[Ryan.Daniel@epa.gov]; Early, William[Early.William@epa.gov]; D'Andrea, Michael[DANDREA.MICHAEL@EPA.GOV]; schaffer, joan[schaffer.joan@epa.gov]; White, Terri-A[White.Terri-A@epa.gov]; Sternberg, David[Sternberg.David@epa.gov]; Smith, Bonnie[smith.bonnie@epa.gov]; Grundahl, Nancy[Grundahl.Nancy@epa.gov]; Seneca, Roy[Seneca.Roy@epa.gov]; Miller, Linda[miller.linda@epa.gov]; Ferrell, Mark[Ferrell.Mark@epa.gov]; damm, thomas[Damm.Thomas@epa.gov]  
**From:** Seneca, Roy  
**Sent:** Fri 3/7/2014 3:48:19 PM  
**Subject:** Headlines Highlights for RA's Tablet - FRIDAY, March 7, 2014

# Headlines Highlights for RA's Tablet - FRIDAY, March 7, 2014

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## WITF Radio Harrisburg (NPR)

### Water quality improving in Chesapeake Bay watershed

Written by [Ben Allen, Morning Edition Host](#) | Mar 7, 2014 4:06 AM

(Annapolis, Md.) -- [New data](#) shows efforts to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay are working. But despite the progress, scientists are warily looking towards the future.

The [Chesapeake Bay Program](#) says upgrading wastewater treatment plants and reducing runoff from farms proved to be the most successful ways to get pollutants out of the water in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The results relied on actual data measurements from more than 100 sites in the Maryland-Pennsylvania-Delaware region.

"We're not going to solve our problems overnight. We've got to deal with lag times and

increasing pressures from population. We've doubled the population in this watershed in that period. We've got to do more to maintain the health of this magnificent Chesapeake Bay," says Bill Dennison, Vice President for Science Applications at the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Science.

Dennison and others involved in the study say population growth will require more creative and effective methods to reduce pollution and maintain the gains.

"You may not see it now, but we can look across these streams, down the watershed, in places like the Long Haven, and Lititz Run in Pennsylvania, on the Eastern Shore, and show examples where 10, 20 years ago, they were facing those same things, they were putting actions in place, and they were waiting to see that response from the system as they continue to do it," says Rich Batiuk, Associate Director for Science, Analysis and Implementation at the Chesapeake Bay Program.

The researchers say the public shouldn't be disappointed if water quality doesn't immediately improve after changes, since there's often a lag time in seeing results.

The Susquehanna River is the bay's largest tributary. A link to the report can be found at [witf.org](http://witf.org).

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# Reuters News Service

## House advances bill curbing EPA power plant emission limits

By Valerie Volcovici, *Reuters*

Posted: Friday, March 7, 2014, 1:08 AM

WASHINGTON - A bill to curb the ability of the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on carbon emissions from power plants cleared a hurdle in the U.S. House on Thursday but faces bleak prospects of becoming law.

The Republican-controlled House passed the bill by a 229-183 vote, but the Senate, in which Democrats hold a majority, has no timetable to consider the legislation. President Obama already has threatened to veto the bill.

The legislation was the latest in a series of strong messages sent by lawmakers from large coal-producing states to Obama, as his administration aims to cement a legacy of combating climate change by cracking down on carbon emissions.

Rep. Ed Whitfield (R., Ky.) said the bill was a "reasonable alternative" to proposed carbon

emissions standards by the EPA for new power plants and forthcoming rules to limit pollution from existing power plants.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D., Calif.) countered that the bill was "part of the Republicans' ongoing attack on the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Air Act authority to address carbon pollution."

The EPA in September proposed a rule that says any future coal plants built in the United States must be able to emit at a rate of no more than 1,100 pounds of carbon dioxide per megawatt hour, far below an estimated 1,700 to 1,900 pounds/MWh for the most efficient plants currently in operation.

The agency is due to release by June what will be the centerpiece of Obama's climate strategy - emissions standards for the country's more than 1,000 existing power plants, the bulk of which burn coal.

Whitfield said on the House floor Thursday that the bill would give "the flexibility to build a coal fired plant in America" if natural gas, which is currently cheap compared with coal, starts to get more expensive.

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## How They Voted

Representatives from the Philadelphia area voting to curb the EPA rules were Charles W. Dent (R., Pa.), Michael Fitzpatrick (R., Pa.), Jim Gerlach (R., Pa.), Pat Meehan (R., Pa.), Joseph R. Pitts (R., Pa.), Jon Runyan (R., N.J.), and Christopher H. Smith (R., N.J.).

Voting against the bill were Robert A. Brady (D., Pa.), John Carney (D., Del.), Matt Cartwright (D., Pa.), Chaka Fattah (D., Pa.), and Frank A. LoBiondo (R., N.J.).

Not voting: Allyson Y. Schwartz (D., Pa.).

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# Charleston Daily Mail

## Long-term medical surveillance underway after spill

by [Marcus Constantino](#)

Daily Mail Staff

Water-related injuries related to crude MCHM exposure have seemingly stopped, and Dr. Rahul Gupta, Kanawha-Charleston Health Department director, said the county health department has

turned its attention to a long-term population monitoring program.

Gupta is calling the initiative the Community Health Providers Syndromic Surveillance Program. Doctors at 20 participating facilities will keep track of patients who experienced what they believed were injuries related to exposure to water or MCHM fumes.

"We're not following the people, we're following the providers," Gupta said. "We're following a number of clinicians that are sending us information. We have about 250 patients so far."

Kanawha-Charleston tracked short-term health effects from the beginning of the spill. Though Gupta said the health department stopped receiving data from area emergency rooms on Jan. 24, he noticed some interesting trends from that data.

"We've clearly seen there was a double spike," Gupta said. "There was a second spike after people were told to flush their pipes on Jan. 13 and 14, but the cases have since dwindled."

More than 500 people were treated at hospitals for symptoms possibly related to chemical exposure. The most common symptoms were skin irritation including rashes, eye irritation, nausea, diarrhea and some cases of vomiting and headaches.

"It's clear that the skin and eye irritation are more commonly self-reported than others," Gupta said. "These are more of chemical allergic type of reactions."

The odor tends to result in some people's reactions, such as nausea, vomiting, cough and asthma as well."

Gupta said although the state stopped collecting health data from emergency rooms on Jan. 24, the health department has continued collecting data on acute health effects from area physicians. Janet Briscoe, director of epidemiology for the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, said participating physicians have filled out questionnaires on each patient.

The questionnaires ask for patients' gender, age, symptoms, treatment administered, where and when the patient was exposed to water, whether the exposure occurred in a zone West Virginia American Water had cleared for flushing and how patients came into contact with water (drinking, bathing, etc.).

Gupta said the earliest reported exposure time was Jan. 8, the day before the chemical leak was discovered at Freedom Industries.

He said the latest reported exposure occurred Feb. 20.

Gupta said a reasonable long-term medical monitoring program will have five important components. A patient registry, including patients' names and contact information, will need to be kept so that patients can be warned if any long-term health effects are discovered.

Second, a population-based survey should be conducted among a sample of affected individuals,

which includes tracking the individuals' health.

Third, biomonitoring of patients will need to be conducted.

"You draw blood samples and other samples and freeze them for a long time, so if you need to, you can test them," Gupta said.

Then, a longitudinal follow-up should be conducted. Gupta said this means an effort should be made to have as much of the affected population as possible fill out a questionnaire.

Finally, relevant public health analysis and research will be conducted with all the data collected.

Data reported by participating clinicians will be collected and aggregated by the health department.

Gupta said that data can be collected and analyzed over time and could catch any potential trends in long-term health effects. For example, if a particular health effect was spotted among patients of a certain age, gender or with another health condition, proactive steps could be taken to protect others.

Just because a person had a rash doesn't mean they will have long-term health effects, and just because a person didn't have a rash doesn't mean they can't experience long-term health effects," Gupta said.

"We need to make sure we discern the significance between short- and long-term health effects."

One of Gupta's biggest concerns is funding. An amendment adopted into Senate Bill 373 - commonly known as the Water Bill - on Wednesday requires the Bureau for Public Health to study potential long-term health effects the chemicals might have on people in the affected area.

The medical monitoring requirement had briefly been removed from the bill.

Gupta applauded lawmakers for re-including provisions for long-term health monitoring, but said it cannot be done without funding.

"It's also equally critical to have funding tied in in order to have the ability to conduct it in a relevant manner," Gupta said. "It's going to take a degree of passion to ensure this can be done."

Gupta said the health department has received no additional funding so far for any of the work it has done related to the chemical leak. He said further studies need to be done on animals to determine if there are any carcinogenic effects, and that if funding for long-term health surveillance isn't tied in with legislation, "there's no likelihood it's going to be done."

"We have no funding as of right now," Gupta said.

"We are not giving up, but we have got to make sure the public knows without funding, nothing

gets done, unfortunately."

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# Delaware Cape Gazette

## Markell says clean water is priority

### *Fee to help fund \$800M in statewide projects*

**By Chris Flood | Mar 07, 2014**

LEWES — Gov. Jack Markell wants to clean up Delaware's dirty water - and he wants Delawareans to help pay for it.

On Tuesday, March 4, Gov. Markell introduced a clean water initiative, Clean Water for Delaware's Future, that would pay for roughly \$800 million worth of wastewater, stormwater and drinking water projects throughout the state by instituting a clean water fee.

"Clean water is essential for a healthy and prosperous Delaware," said Markell during the unveiling of the plan in Wilmington. "We have made great strides reducing air pollution and cleaning up brownfield sites, yet nearly every waterway in Delaware, other than our beaches, remains unsafe for swimming and fishing, and nearly every community is struggling with more frequent flooding and storms."

The governor proposed more than \$500 million in wastewater-facility upgrades statewide. These include priority projects in all three counties—including underserved communities needing wastewater and drinking water improvements and several at-risk systems currently operated by homeowners associations in Sussex County. He also proposed more than \$150 million in stormwater upgrades, more than \$75 million for removing toxics, and more than \$75 million in upgrades at industrial facilities.

The plan will be collected through county property taxes and generate \$30 million annually, Markell said. The fee will leverage more than \$120 million annually in total financing for clean water investments.

The amount a homeowner would pay for the proposed fee is based on acreage. For a single-family household living on a half-acre of land, the average cost would be about \$45 annually. The fee would increase to between \$65 and \$85 a year for properties with more acreage. Larger multiresidential, commercial and industrial properties would pay more, with the maximum annual fee capped at \$25,000.

Sen. Gary Simpson, R-Milford, said this was the wrong time to propose the plan, especially on the heels of a proposed 10-cent gas tax increase. On Jan. 29, Markell introduced a plan to pay for

\$500 million worth of transportation projects across the state by increasing the state's fuel tax from 23 cents to 33 cents and borrowing \$50 million a year over the next five years. The new tax is estimated to raise \$50 million a year.

“We’re just asking too much of Delaware’s people in bad economic times. We’re putting another tax burden on homeowners and businesses at a time when we should be lowering costs and spurring economic development,” he said. “There’s no denying we’ve got water-quality issues here and throughout the United States. But we need to address them at a time – and at a price – that makes sense.”

The state’s list of impaired waters includes 377 bodies of water that suffer from excess nutrients - nitrogen and phosphorus, low dissolved oxygen, toxics, and bacteria. Extensive analysis of chemical contaminants in fish has led to advisories that fish are unsafe to eat in more than 30 waterways statewide.

“The plan will invest in projects that improve water quality, improve community resiliency, protect our health and safety, support our multibillion-dollar tourism and agriculture industries, bolster the economic revitalization of our cities and towns, and increase property values - all while creating thousands of jobs for years to come,” said Markell.

House Minority Leader Daniel B. Short, R-Seafood, said the state's water problems were undeniable, but he wants to hear what constituents had to say about the plan before anything is done.

“Delaware’s citizens would collectively be contributing most of the \$30 million raised through the new annual fee. I think we owe it to them to get their opinions on this proposal before we move ahead,” he said. “It should be debated, questioned and potentially changed to reflect citizens’ concerns and input as part of a process aimed at improving the plan and building a consensus for action.”

The existing Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan programs currently have about \$30 million annually available to fund wastewater and drinking water projects, which the governor said was not nearly enough to finance many of the critical projects.

Markell said about 30 percent of the revenues from the new fee would go to wastewater/drinking water upgrades, while stormwater upgrades would also get 30 percent. The remaining monies would go to conservation and agriculture projects (15 percent); toxics removal, site cleanup and stream restoration (20 percent); and industrial upgrades (5 percent).

The fund will help finance these projects through a combination of low or no-interest loans, affordability grants, credit enhancements, matches for federal grants, and leveraged private financing, all of which will reduce the cost of constructing clean water projects for municipalities and other entities.

Charlie Copeland, Delaware Republican Party chairman, released a statement shortly after the proposal was unveiled. He said the governor should focus on creating job opportunities, not

proposing another new tax on Delawareans.

“This morning the governor lectured the citizens of Delaware again about what he feels are their obligations to the next generation, and proposed yet another new tax on Delawareans to make this happen. This time on tap water,” he said. “The truth is, we have a fundamental responsibility to provide an education and good job opportunities to the next generation of Delawareans. Gov. Markell has failed at both of these.”

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### **What the plan will do**

Funds generated by the initiative will be used to support numerous critical projects including:

- \* remove toxics and restore streams and rivers
- \* repair and update wastewater and drinking water treatment plants
- \* modernize stormwater infrastructure in communities to improve flood and storm resilience
- \* support conservation/agricultural practices that prevent pollutants from reaching surface and ground waters
- \* protect and restore critical natural resources like wetlands and forests that help purify water and mitigate flooding
- \* make important upgrades to industries, which will systematically reduce impacts to water resources.

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# **Delaware County Daily Times**

## **Ex-Rep. Weldon warns of oil-transport dangers**

**By Kathleen Carey, Delaware County Daily Times**

Posted: 03/05/14, 10:23 PM EST

EDDYSTONE — Former congressman Curt Weldon on Wednesday warned that Pennsylvania should be as prepared as possible for a disaster as Bakken crude oil begins to be transported into the state in larger volumes.



He said it's not a question of if there will be a disaster, but when.

Industry experts, on the other hand, pointed to the statistical evidence that moving materials by rail is relatively safe, although they did acknowledge some high-profile incidents and offered changes that have been made in response to those events.

These testimonies were part of the "Emergency Preparedness and Response Capabilities Related to the Transportation of Crude Oil across the Commonwealth" hearing in front of the Pennsylvania Veteran Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee at the Eddystone Fire Co.

Part of the reason for the hearing was the construction of a Bakken crude oil unloading facility less than a mile away. Through a joint partnership between Enbridge Inc. and Canopy Prospecting Inc., the Eddystone Rail Project will transport 80,000 barrels per day initially, and potentially up to 160,000 barrels, of light sweet crude from North Dakota to be unloaded at an Exelon Generation facility, then pumped out to barges on the Delaware River prior to delivery.

Bakken crude was being transported in Lac-Megantic, Canada, in July when the train derailed and exploded, causing 47 deaths. In January, a CSX train carrying crude derailed as a result of improper track maintenance, according to state officials, although no one was injured and no leakages were reported.

"This crude is not the crude of old," Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency Chief Deputy Director Robert Full said. "This crude has a lower flash and ignition point."

Weldon was mayor of Marcus Hook during the 1975 Corinthos disaster in which 29 people died after the Corinthos and Edgar M. Queeny ships collided and burned for three days.

"The product that exploded and burned out of control was light crude," he said. "The same product that is going to be shipped in all those rail cars. Prior to the Corinthos disaster, no one believed that an incident of this magnitude could ever occur in the United States inland waters, let alone in a community with a population of less than 5,000 people."

He urged the committee to exercise its oversight capabilities to make certain detailed emergency response plans are in place, especially considering cutbacks that have been made over time.

"Every refinery had its own fire department," Weldon said. "That's not the case today. I urge you to ask the refineries and the companies what their staffing levels were 20 years ago and what are they today as they increase their operations."

Weldon said the state should request a grant to create a comprehensive emergency response template that could set a national emergency response standard.

He pointed to the San Antonio-based Bob Andrews Group, which wants to build a specialized, regional fire station in Delaware County to respond to emergency industrial incidents.

“Make no mistake,” Weldon said, “an incident involving rail transport of oil will occur in the commonwealth and lives, including first-responder lives, and property will be put at risk. These incidents have occurred in the past and they will occur in the future.”

David Julian, vice president of safety and environmental for Norfolk Southern, one of the companies planning to transport the Bakken crude into Eddystone, spoke to the historical safety of these operations.

“Between 2000 and 2013, the U.S. rail industry originated 825,000 carloads of crude oil,” he said. “(And) 99.993 percent of those carloads arrived at their destination without a release caused by an accident.”

Julian said last year alone his company handled 500,000 loaded hazmat shipments, 99.999 percent of which arrived without a release due to an accident.

He and Howard R. “Skip” Elliott, vice president of public safety, health and environment for CSX Transportation, spoke of the voluntary practices put into place last month as part of an agreement reached by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the major American freight railroads.

They included speed restrictions, train inspection requirements and train handling provisions.

In addition, the Association of American Railroads is creating a \$5 million fund to train local emergency responders in how to deal with crude.

Another recent standard includes the U.S. Department of Transportation emergency order issue for shippers to test product from the Bakken region and to have it identified when it is being transported by rail.

In the meantime, Weldon urged for caution.

“Throughout the years, we were always told that such incidents could never occur, that industry had all of the answers and not to worry,” he said. “I applaud industry, but I encourage you to exert your oversight responsibility as you have in the past.”

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# Philadelphia Inquirer

**Pa. seeks \$2.4M from Sunoco over gas spill**

**By Andrew Maykuth, Inquirer Staff Writer**

**Posted: March 06, 2014**

Pennsylvania is seeking \$2.4 million in civil penalties against Sunoco Logistics Partners for alleged Clean Streams Law violations related to a November 2008 spill of 12,000 gallons of gasoline near Pittsburgh.

The spill in Murrys ville, Westmoreland County, killed virtually all the aquatic life in a three-mile stretch of Turtle Creek, according to a complaint filed Friday by the Department of Environmental Protection with the Environmental Hearing Board.

The DEP said a valve in the company's eight-inch pipeline ruptured shortly after a maintenance crew worked at the site, near a strip mall on Route 22.

The rupture unleashed a 20- to 30-foot geyser of gasoline.

"Gasoline rained down onto and into nearby businesses, parking lots, and the surrounding soils and surfaces," the legal action stated. A restaurant in the mall was closed for a month because of the odor.

The Philadelphia company made a cleanup effort, but delayed installing a continuous pumping system regulators had recommended, so contaminants continued to leach into Turtle Creek until 2010.

Regulators also found gasoline or its constituent chemicals in groundwater near the site as late as June.

Sunoco spokesman Jeffrey Shields said in a statement that the company disputed the DEP's allegations as well as its characterization of the events.

"Sunoco Logistics acted quickly, aggressively, and responsibly during this event, with human health, safety, and protection of the environment our top priorities at all times," he said.

"We look forward to the opportunity to respond to the complaint before the Environmental Hearing Board at the appropriate time."

The company has already paid \$232,900 to the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration and \$99,000 to the state Fish and Boat Commission to settle violations related to the spill.

Sunoco Logistics is represented by Bala Cynwyd lawyer Marc E. Gold of Manko, Gold & Katcher L.L.P.

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# Lynchburg News and

# Advance

## DEQ study will examine James River watershed

**By Alex Rohr | Posted: Wednesday, March 5, 2014 1:40 pm**

With 19 sections of the James River and its tributaries observed to be violating legal bacteria levels, the Department of Environmental Quality is asking for public comment in redeveloping a study on sources of pollution.

The DEQ in conjunction with Region 2000, held a public meeting Tuesday night at Randolph College to present the study's preliminary findings, which examined sections of streams and the James River from which they stem.

Violations were found in water bodies in Amherst, Bedford and Campbell counties and Lynchburg as well as the James.

The total maximum daily load study, which examines the amount of bacteria a body of water can handle to meet standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency was last completed in 2007. It is being redeveloped by request from Lynchburg so the city can update its own combined sewer overflows strategy.

Jim Kern, who spoke for MapTech Inc., the company performing the study, said streams were examined as representative of general watersheds in the area. One impairment evidences pollution in another, he said.

The TMDL study includes estimates of farm, domestic and wild animals, and people because fecal matter is the main source of E. coli. It also lists discharges that have been permitted.

Kern asked for help identifying specific sources of discharge, such as straight pipes that release untreated water or someone regularly hosing off fecal matter at a kennel or farm.

The public comment period opened last night and continues until April 3. Details on impaired streams and permitted discharges are available at <http://www.region2000.org/total-maximum-daily-load-tmdl-studies.html> under the "Project Presentations" heading.

Official comments must be written and can be sent by email, fax or postal mail. They should include the name, address and telephone number of the person commenting and be received by April 3.

Comments may be sent to Paula Nash, at the DEQ, Blue Ridge Regional Office, 7705 Timberlake Road, Lynchburg, VA 24502, by phone at (434) 582-6216, by email at [Paula.Nash@deq.virginia.gov](mailto:Paula.Nash@deq.virginia.gov), or by fax at (434) 582-5125

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# BN A Daily Environment Report

## McCarthy Confident Power Plant Rule Will Be ‘Legally Solid’

By Lynn Garner

March 6 — Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy said the agency plans to issue a proposed rule June 1 to lower carbon emissions at existing fossil fuel-fired power plants and to release a long-term study on the potential risks to drinking water from hydraulic fracturing by the end of 2014.

McCarthy, speaking March 6 at the annual IHS CERAWeek conference in Houston, said the power plant rulemaking has been subjected to a national outreach with utilities, state regulators and other stakeholders and to “unprecedented” comment.

“We’re going to get this right,” McCarthy said. “I’m not going to let the president down. We will have a rule that is legally solid.”

McCarthy said she fully expects the proposed rule to curb existing power plant emissions to be criticized either as completely inadequate or too extreme.

“I’m quite sure people will be disappointed in many ways,” McCarthy predicted.

“We’ve heard these arguments again and again before, that everything we do is going to shut down the economy as we know it. And every single time those arguments have fallen flat,” McCarthy said.

While utilities and many state regulators are concerned with grid reliability and electricity price spikes, they should also consider the fact that there are other types of costs, McCarthy said.

The year 2012 was the second costliest year in U.S. history for natural disasters that were intensified by climate change at a cost of \$110 billion, she said.

### **Optimistic on Carbon Sequestration**

McCarthy declined to comment directly on the March 6 passage in the Republican-controlled House of a bill (H.R. 3826) that would block EPA from moving ahead with a separate

rulemaking that would limit carbon emissions from new power plants until carbon capture and sequestration technology is commercially demonstrated.

Instead, she expressed confidence in the agency's approach. "We feel very confident that CCS presents a real opportunity for the coal industry to be part of the energy mix for decades to come," McCarthy said.

A companion bill (S. 1905) faces long odds for passage in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

McCarthy also declined to say when the agency may turn its attention to reducing carbon emissions from petroleum refineries and other stationary sources under the Clean Air Act. She said the agency has been focused on power plant emissions and finalizing the rule for existing facilities in June 2015.

On other subjects, McCarthy said the EPA will provide comments to the State Department's final environmental review for the Keystone XL oil pipeline. Those comments will be part of the public record, she said.

The Keystone XL permitting process is in the midst of a 90-day interagency review that started with the Jan. 31 release of the State Department's generally favorable environmental review.

McCarthy gave a vigorous defense of the agency's numerous rulemakings as part of President Barack Obama's climate action plan at a conference attended by energy executives, government regulators and energy analysts from 55 countries. She did not announce any new initiatives.

### **Fracking Study Still Being Developed**

McCarthy said the hydraulic fracturing, or fracking study, has been delayed because it is "a large undertaking" encompassing 18 separate studies. The agency is still trying to clarify the potential impacts of fracking on water quality, she said.

"It is a large research project that we think needs to be properly peer reviewed," McCarthy said.

McCarthy was expected to meet with utility executives during her conference visit to discuss their concerns.

Nick Akins, chairman, president and CEO of American Electric Power, said in a panel discussion that EPA's upcoming rule to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants will determine the future of coal generation in this country.

"Baseload generation is challenged at this point in these markets," Akins said, adding that coal should continue to be part of the power generation mix well into the future.

"You can't restart retired plants," Akins said. "We need to let technology catch up."

"You're not going to see any new coal units" because of new environmental regulations, he

predicted.

Lynn Good, president and CEO of Duke Energy, said her company will have retired 5,800 megawatts of coal-fired generation by 2015. The remainder of the fleet will be upgraded to meet EPA's mercury and toxic emissions rule and new air and water quality rules, she said.

Good said the amount of "potential stranded investment is overlooked." Duke is spending \$7.5 billion to \$8 billion to upgrade the company's remaining fossil fuel fleet and wants those facilities to have a long life and run 20 years or more.

"I do not see a new coal plant in our planning for Duke," Good said. The company has invested \$3 billion in wind and solar generation, she said, and renewable will continue to grow in Duke's portfolio.

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# Greenwire

## Coalition presses Congress, agencies to curb farms' nutrient discharges

**By Amanda Peterka, E&E reporter**

**Published: Thursday, March 6, 2014**

A coalition of advocacy groups, scientists and even a fertilizer industry representative is visiting federal agencies and Congress this week urging them to promote curbing agricultural water pollution.

At issue: excessive nutrients flushed from farms that fuel algal blooms that choke aquatic life.

Today's agenda includes meeting with the Agriculture Department, U.S. EPA, and conservation and farm groups, according to Eric Davidson, president of the Biogeosciences Section of the American Geophysical Union and a coalition member.

"Providing food security without polluting the environment is a huge challenge," Davidson said in an interview. "We made progress in some regards. Agriculture in the U.S. is becoming more efficient, and yet the problem in the Chesapeake and the Gulf, those problems are not going away."

More than 160 scientists, agronomists, agricultural extension agents, agriculture industry representatives, regulators and representatives of nonprofits met in Kansas City, Mo., last August to explore the barriers to increasing nitrogen efficiency in agriculture. Nitrogen is a key nutrient

used in farming, but inefficient applications lead to serious pollution problems.

In a document released after the meeting, the coalition found that farmers have a wide array of technologies to increase nitrogen efficiency, including improved irrigation, controlled-release fertilizers and conservation practices.

But it also found that farmers perceive a financial risk in applying less nutrients and that the lack of visible impact to cropland makes it difficult to sell new technologies.

Davidson said that he and other coalition members would present the group's findings to the agencies and push for a new agricultural research foundation created by the new farm bill to focus on nutrient management. The researchers are asking EPA to work closely with university extension agents to build trust with farmers.

"Our mission is not to advocate for any particular regulatory approach. We're just advocating that they be engaged and build trust and work with ag extension to try to find solutions," Davidson said. "I think that they are recognizing that command and control from Washington is going to be met with a lot of resistance. We're looking for ways to be effective at the local level."

The coalition is also pushing for the creation of a national database of information from fertilizer response trials.

Soil Science Society of America President Charles Rice; the Fertilizer Institute's director of stewardship programs, Lara Beal Moody; and World Resources Institute Senior Associate Michelle Perez are among those meeting with USDA and EPA today.

The group yesterday met with staffers on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee and plans to meet tomorrow with their counterparts in the House. The committees just completed work on the most recent five-year farm bill, the main vehicle for agricultural policy in the country.

Davidson said the goal is to keep the conversation on nutrient management alive in Washington.

"For Congress, the farm bill's a done deal. Although they're on implementing aspects and funding, it's still worthwhile to be giving them the latest information on what the community is saying," he said.



Valerie Volcovici, *Reuters*

Posted: Friday, March 7, 2014, 1:08 AM

WASHINGTON - A bill to curb the ability of the Environmental Protection Agency to set limits on carbon emissions from power plants cleared a hurdle in the U.S. House on Thursday but faces bleak prospects of becoming law.

The Republican-controlled House passed the bill by a 229-183 vote, but the Senate, in which Democrats hold a majority, has no timetable to consider the legislation. President Obama already has threatened to veto the bill.

The legislation was the latest in a series of strong messages sent by lawmakers from large coal-producing states to Obama, as his administration aims to cement a legacy of combating climate change by cracking down on carbon emissions.

Rep. Ed Whitfield (R., Ky.) said the bill was a "reasonable alternative" to proposed carbon emissions standards by the EPA for new power plants and forthcoming rules to limit pollution from existing power plants.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D., Calif.) countered that the bill was "part of the Republicans' ongoing attack on the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Air Act authority to address carbon pollution."

The EPA in September proposed a rule that says any future coal plants built in the United States must be able to emit at a rate of no more than 1,100 pounds of carbon dioxide per megawatt hour, far below an estimated 1,700 to 1,900 pounds/MWh for the most efficient plants currently in operation.

The agency is due to release by June what will be the centerpiece of Obama's climate strategy - emissions standards for the country's more than 1,000 existing power plants, the bulk of which burn coal.

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## How They Voted

Representatives from the Philadelphia area voting to curb the EPA rules were Charles W. Dent (R., Pa.), Michael Fitzpatrick (R., Pa.), Jim Gerlach (R., Pa.), Pat Meehan (R., Pa.), Joseph R. Pitts (R., Pa.), Jon Runyan (R., N.J.), and Christopher H. Smith (R., N.J.).

Voting against the bill were Robert A. Brady (D., Pa.), John Carney (D., Del.), Matt Cartwright (D., Pa.), Chaka Fattah (D., Pa.), and Frank A. LoBiondo (R., N.J.).

Not voting: Allyson Y. Schwartz (D., Pa.).

Read more at

[http://www.philly.com/philly/news/nation\\_world/20140307\\_House\\_advances\\_bill\\_curbing\\_EPA\\_power\\_plant\\_emission\\_limits.html#5OCTKKu8CWY2CGkH.99](http://www.philly.com/philly/news/nation_world/20140307_House_advances_bill_curbing_EPA_power_plant_emission_limits.html#5OCTKKu8CWY2CGkH.99)